

# GULF OF ALASKA RATIONALIZATION

## *Proposed Amendment to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska*

### Scoping Guide to the Gulf of Alaska Rationalization Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) (Short Version)



Photo: Kodiak Harbor, NMFS

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## Introduction

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is considering recommending new management measures to “rationalize” the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish fisheries. Rationalization may be defined as the process of improving the economic stability to the various participants in the fishery. These participants may include harvesters, processors, and residents of fishing communities. The Council is considering these new management policies at the request of the GOA groundfish industry to address its increasing concerns about the economic stability of GOA groundfish fisheries. Some of these concerns include changing market opportunities and stock abundance, increasing concern about the long-term economic health of fishing dependent communities, and the limited ability of the fishing industry to respond to environmental concerns (e.g., Steller’s sea lion) under the existing management regime.

The Council may consider significantly changing the current management structure by allocating fishing or processing privileges such as: individual fishing quotas (IFQs); individual processing quotas (IPQs); allocations to communities; and fishing cooperatives. These tools may allow fishery participants to change their fishing and processing operations to make it more profitable and responsive to current problems in the GOA groundfish fishery. Alternatively, the Council may choose to modify the existing License Limitation Program (LLP), or maintain the existing management structure. A variety of management approaches have been discussed by the Council and its committees in during the past three years.

## Public Participation

To help the Council in their decisionmaking, the Council and NMFS will conduct an SEIS to examine the potential scope, alternatives, and effects of this proposed action. NMFS will hold a series of public scoping meetings to gather additional information from the public (Box 1).

### BOX 1: Public Scoping Meetings for GOA Rationalization SEIS

In addition to regularly scheduled Council and GOA Working Group meetings, and written comments, the public can also attend public scoping meetings at the following locations and times to provide comments.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Location</u>
August 17	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Sand Point, AK	Aleutians East Borough Office, 100 Mossberry Lane
August 18	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	King Cove, AK	King Cove Harbor House, 100 Harbor Road
August 23	1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Kodiak, AK	Fishery Industrial Technology Ctr., 118 Trident Way
September 16	5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Cordova, AK	Cordova City Library Meeting Room, 622 First Street
September 24	2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Homer, AK	Best Western Bidarka Inn, 575 Sterling Hwy
September 26	3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Petersburg, AK	City Council Chambers, 12 Nordic Drive
October 1	6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Seattle, WA	Doubletree Hotel–Seattle Airport, 18740 Pacific Hwy.

NMFS is accepting written comment on this proposed action through **November 15, 2002**. Public comment, either at the public scoping meetings, regular Council meetings, Council

committee meetings, or in writing will help determine the issues of concern and the appropriate range of alternatives in the SEIS. The SEIS will assist the Council in its decisionmaking process. The Council formed the GOA Work Group to assist it in exploring the key issues and it developed a Problem Statement–why something needs to be done, and Objectives–what rationalization should do. The Council adopted these statements during its April 2002 meeting (Box 2).

<b>BOX 2: Problem Statement and Objectives</b>	
<b>Proposed Problem Statement for Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Rationalization (Adopted by Council – April 2002)</b>	
Increasing participation in the Gulf of Alaska fisheries, as well as increasing catching and processing capacity, have intensified the race for fish with the attendant problems of:	
1.	reduced economic viability of the harvesters, processors, and GOA communities
2.	high bycatch,
3.	decreased safety,
4.	reduced product value and utilization,
5.	jeopardy to community stability and their historic reliance on groundfish fishing and processing,
6.	limited the ability of the fishery harvesters and processors to respond to changes in the ecosystem
7.	limited the ability to adapt to Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) requirements to minimize bycatch and protect habitat,
8.	limited the ability to adapt to changes to other applicable law (i.e., Endangered Species Act).
All of these factors have made achieving Magnuson-Stevens Act goals difficult and force reevaluation of the status quo.	
<b>Objectives for Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Rationalization (Adopted by Council – April 2002)</b>	
1.	Maintain the character of an independent harvester fleet while allowing for meaningful reduction of excess capacity.
2.	Foster a healthy, competitive processing and harvesting environment.
3.	Protect the harvesting, processing, and community sectors from losing the relative value of their existing investments.
4.	Maintain the relative market balance between the harvesting and processing sectors.
5.	Provide opportunities for Gulf of Alaska coastal communities to benefit from rationalization programs.
6.	Consider historic and recent participation for allocating the benefits of rationalization to all three sectors.
7.	Maintain and encourage participation in rationalized fisheries by active holders of quota shares, catch histories, or licenses.
8.	Effectively control excessive consolidation and vertical integration by all sectors.
9.	Consider the status of skippers and crew.
10.	Provide entry level opportunities for individuals.
11.	Meet Magnuson-Stevens Act requirements, including conservation requirements.
12.	End the race for fish and improve the economic viability of harvesters and processors.

**Question ? *Does the problem statement describe the need for rationalization? Are the objectives the right ones?* Let NMFS and the Council know at the public scoping meetings or in writing – November 15, 2002 deadline.**

## Scope, Alternative, and Issues

The Council will be looking at the Scope – what fisheries and what areas should be considered; Alternatives – what types of approaches’ and important issues – things that should be considered, as it makes its decision on GOA rationalization. Public comment on all of these issues is helpful.

Scope: The initial recommendations from the Council’s GOA Working Group is:

- Rationalization of all GOA groundfish species excluding the sablefish IFQ fishery

There have also been discussions about exempting groundfish fisheries in Southeast Alaska Outside waters—that is, those fisheries in the EEZ that are East of 140 degrees W. long. There is not yet consensus on whether all species of groundfish should be included or whether certain groups such as sharks, skates, octopus, or “other” species including a range of groundfish not commercially harvested should be included or exempted. *Box 3 provides some suggestions for comments you may want to make on the scope of the SEIS.*

### BOX 3: Topics for Public Comment – Scope of Action

The public may wish to comment on the scope of the proposed action. Some ideas for consideration:

- Should all species of groundfish be included or just some? If so why, or why not?
- Should all gear types be included?
- Should both target and bycatch species be included?
- Should fisheries harvested within State waters during the Federal fishery be included?
- Should certain regions of the GOA be excluded from rationalization, or other management alternatives (e.g., Southeast Alaska), if so, why or why not?

Alternatives: The GOA Working Group has not yet developed specific alternatives. The main possibilities discussed so far include: (1) no action – keeping the same management system in place now; (2) modifying the LLP to make it more restrictive; or (3) adopting a rationalization program. The specific options for a rationalization program identified thus far include the use of IFQs, quotas held by communities, fishing cooperatives, and IPQs. *Here are some general and specific questions (Box 4) where public comment is needed :*

### Topics for Public Comment: General Questions on the Alternatives

- Do the alternatives already discussed address the problem facing GOA groundfish fisheries?
- Are there additional alternatives that should be considered—if so, what are they ?  
(e.g., days-at-sea restrictions, trip limits)
- Will the alternatives have “spillover” effects on other fisheries—if so, how might those be addressed ?
- How should the alternatives address harvests of federally managed groundfish in State waters ?
- How will a specific alternative address changes that may occur in the future ?  
(e.g., changing market conditions, conservation measures for protected species, stock dynamics,...)

#### **BOX 4: Topics for Public Comment – Range of Alternatives Specific Issues**

The public may wish to comment on specific topics of the rationalization alternative and the specific options under that broad alternative. Some ideas for consideration and possible options are provided in parentheses. This list is to help provide examples and is not exhaustive. Many of the topics addressed under IFQ's could also apply to the other options.

##### *Rights-based Management Alternative and Options*

###### Individual Fishing Quotas

- Who should receive an initial allocation of quota? (Vessel owners, crew; skippers; corporations;...)
- How should that quota be distributed? (Catch history; auction; years of participation;...)
- Should the quota be transferable? (Eligibility criteria to receive quota by transfer;...)
- Should there be limits on consolidation? (Caps--maximum percentage by quota holder;...)
- Would quota be allocated for bycatch species (quota for all catch; quota for target catch;...)
- How would the quota share limits be monitored? (Observers; Electronic monitoring; shorebased;...)
- Should conservation concerns be addressed? (Gear conversion requirements; spatial and temporal distribution requirements;...)
- Would there be provisions for new entrants? (Auction of portion of quota annually; loans;...)

###### Quotas for Communities

- Which communities should be eligible? (Participation; proximity to resource;...)
- Would allocation be fixed or transferable? (CDQ model; current IFQ Program;...)
- How would the community manage the quota? (Lease to residents; lease to others;...)
- Would there be oversight of management decisions? (CDQ model; current IFQ Program;...)

###### Cooperatives

- Would cooperatives incorporate processors? (Pacific whiting model; AFA "offshore" catcher vessel model; "inshore" catcher vessel model;...)

###### Processor Quota Shares

- Would processor quota share be allocated proportional to IFQ? (A one-to-one direct matching of shares; some ratio less than one-to-one;...)

###### Hybrid Programs

- Which rights-based options would be blended? (IFQ's and IPQ's "two-pie"; IFQ's, IPQ's, and Community Quotas "three-pie"; ...)

##### *License Limitation Program (LLP) Modification Alternative*

- How should the LLP be modified? (Additional recency requirements; gear restrictions; landing requirements; area restrictions;...)
- Which years should be used for modifying the LLP?
- Would other measures be incorporated in the LLP? (Vessel size restrictions; horsepower limits;...)

***When commenting, it would be particularly helpful for the public to identify their preferred alternatives, the structure of that alternative, and why that alternative was chosen. Are there additional rationalization alternatives other than those considered here?***

## Contact Information

The SEIS process is still in its early stages, but now is the time to provide your comments so that the Council can consider your views in its decisionmaking. Box 5 has all the contact information you will need to express your views and participate in the SEIS process.

### **BOX 5: Contact Information for Public Process in GOA Rationalization SEIS**

#### SEIS Public Scoping

- Public Hearings: The public hearings schedule is described in Box 1
- Written Comments: Send written comments on the scope, alternatives, and other issues to:  
Sue Salvesson, Assistant Regional Administrator  
Sustainable Fisheries, Alaska Region, NMFS  
P.O. Box 21668  
Juneau, Alaska 99802
- Fax Number: Comments are accepted via facsimile at:  
(907) 586-7557
- Hand Delivered: Written Comments can be hand delivered at the Alaska Region office at:  
Federal Building  
709 West 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Juneau, Alaska

**All written comments are due by November 15, 2002. Comments sent by email not accepted.**

#### General Information

- NMFS Website: Information on the SEIS is available through the NMFS website at:  
<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov> (Follow the "NEPA Analysis" Link)
- NMFS Staff: Specific questions on the SEIS process can be addressed to:  
Glenn Merrill, Fishery Regulatory Specialist  
Tel: (907) 586-7228  
Email: [Glenn.Merrill@noaa.gov](mailto:Glenn.Merrill@noaa.gov)
- Council Website: Information on the Council GOA Work Group Committee, meeting schedules, agendas, and future SEIS drafts are at the Council website at:  
<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/default.htm>  
(Follow the "Groundfish Rationalization" Link)
- Council Staff: Specific questions on the Council process can be addressed to:  
Jane DiCosimo, Senior Plan Coordinator  
Tel: (907) 271-2809  
Email: [Jane.DiCosimo@noaa.gov](mailto:Jane.DiCosimo@noaa.gov)